MUSEUM NEWS

APRIL
1953
NUMBER 144

THE CRUCIFIXION — DETAIL, JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA
TADDEO DI BARTOLO (1363-1422)

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

AN EARLY SIENESE PAINTING OF THE CRUCIFIXION

THE EASTER SEASON this year is being marked by the display of paintings, ivories, enamels, sculptures and prints which illustrate the events of the Passion. These have been assembled from the Museum's collections to show the Easter story as treated by artists and craftsmen of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. A recently acquired Crucifixion by the Sienese painter Taddeo di Bartolo is a featured work of this exhibition.[1]

Siena, located some thirty miles south of Florence, was, in the very earliest years of the Renaissance, the latter's premier artistic rival. In the thirteenth century she gained and held the upper hand in politics and war, and despite successive military disasters after 1269 the influence of Sienese art was paramount in Italy until the middle of the following century. In 1348 the bubonic plague or Black Death swept over Europe; almost two-thirds of Siena's 42,000 inhabitants died in this catastrophe. Florence was affected to a slightly lesser degree and it was after this time that her art and thought, inspired by new and revolutionary aims, became the mainspring of the Renaissance. Siena, though, did not readily accept these innovations—the spiritual, aristocratic and elegant art practiced by Duccio, Simone Martini and the brothers Lorenzetti was kept alive by men of generally less genius until well after 1400.

It was at about this date that Taddeo di Bartolo (1363-1422) was the most active and prolific Sienese painter, travelling many times to the important towns around Siena. Commissions for his native city were many and they reflect a taste which still demanded the iconographic and stylistic concepts laid down nearly a century before. One of these was the Crucifixion which Duccio, the first great Sienese painter, had originated in a panel for his sumptuous altarpiece of the Virgin in Majesty (1308-11). This type of narrative Crucifixion is a development of the post-Franciscan humanism which thought of the scene in terms of an actual event rather than as a formal symbol. It is not based on any one scriptural account, but is a composite of details drawn from the four Evangelists. Christ on the Cross is flanked by the two thieves. The repentant thief is placed at the favored right side toward which the head and body of the Christ incline. Beneath Him is a crowd of His followers. In the foreground the swooning Virgin is supported by the three Marys while the Magdalene starts forward with an anguished cry. John observes the group with resigned sadness and behind him appears the mounted centurion, Longinus, with the Lance. Four lamenting angels whose bodies end in tufts of cloud surround Jesus, below them appears a group of still-doubting Jews, while nearby five soldiers argue over the division of the Robe. From the hill behind the unrepentant thief, come Roman soldiers bearing the device SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanum) on shields and pennants. Near their head is a mounted red-robed figure, probably Joseph of Arimathaea. He, like Longinus and the repentant thief are marked with scalloped halos which presumably

[1] 52.103; tempera on wood panel; W. 33 3/16" x H. 19 11/16".

THE CRUCIFIXION — TADDEO DI BARTOLO (1363-1422)
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signify their first recognition of Christ at the Crucifixion. The brilliant, almost garish, colors of the crowd contrast with the somber gray of the landscape. The three crosses are silhouetted against a conventional gold sky.

Taddeo's interest in narrative drama is apparent in this crowded composition; many figures are treated with animation of expression, but others show a more awkward handling. The full and broad drapery is distorted to create a heavy and ungainly appearance, particularly in the group round the Virgin.

The painting of Siena, though today overshadowed in our minds by that of Florence, must be regarded as the culmination of a long development which had its roots in the traditional art of Byzantium. Two compositions with strong similarities to ours still exist from the second half of the century and they link Taddeo with the years before 1348. One is a fresco of the Crucifixion by Barna de Siena done in 1367 for the Collegiata of San Gimignano. The other is a somewhat later panel by Bartolo di Fredi (c. 1330-1410) in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Indeed, it was to him that Bernhard Berenson attributed the panel now in Toledo.[2]

The condition of our panel which may have been part of the predella of an altarpiece, is unusually good. The delicate brushwork associated with the tempera medium appears to particular advantage in the three Crucifixes. Here, too, the green underpaint which was commonly employed is clearly visible through the modeling of flesh tones. Taddeo is most fairly remembered as the guardian of an old tradition which came directly from medieval ideals. To it he added personal devotion and invention which has left us with a production characteristic of its time.

[2] Berenson, B., THE CENTRAL ITALIAN PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE, New York, 1909, p. 141. In the collection of Georges Chalandon, Paris and Lyons.

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HOURS: Sundays, Mondays, and
Holidays, 1 - 5 P.M.
Other days, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

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Berthe Morisot Edouard Manet

APRIL EXHIBITIONS

Berthe Morisot and Her Circle

Thirty paintings which had been owned by the noted French Impressionist painter, Berthe Morisot, have been lent by her daughter, Mme. Ernest Rouart, for exhibition in seven leading museums of the United States and Canada.

Her own works form a survey, not only of her artistic development, but are of interest for their subjects; family and friends shown in the gardens of their homes; children—her own and others—painted in landscape settings and interiors. Seven paintings by Edouard Manet, her brother-in-law, are included, as well as one each by Degas, Monet, and Renoir.

Design in Industry

Presented by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, as a report on their industrial design program in which ten major manufacturers participated.

Work of Priscilla Rhiel

Oils, gouache, water colors, and drawings by a Toledo Area artist, who has received several awards in annual exhibitions, will be shown in Gallery 8, opening April 12.